

"If one word would sum up this project, it's 'coordination.'"
—Jennifer Hoppa, NYC Park's Deputy Director of Planning



(Iwan Baan/Friends of the High Line)

High Line Park

NEW YORK CITY

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High Line Park was created when local activists partnered with city government to transform an abandoned freight railway into a new and unusual urban park in Manhattan.

Built in 1934 to remedy the public safety nightmare created by the original street-level line, the elevated High Line was used to move freight from the West Side's shipping docks to the industrial areas of the meat packing district and beyond. In 1980 the High Line was abandoned, spurring a controversy over what would become of the elevated tracks. Some wanted the High Line to be demolished; others saw its promise as a public open space. Ultimately, the efforts of two neighborhood activists paid off and the High Line was transformed into a long and narrow "park in the sky."

In June 2009, the first section of High Line Park opened to much fanfare. In addition to creating a well-used public space, the park has been credited with bringing new development to the neighborhood. By 2008, over 1.5 million square feet of living spaces, offices and hotels were under construction, with another 2.5 million square feet of space in the planning stages. NYC officials expect High Line Park to generate \$900M in revenue for the City over the next 30 years and spur \$4B in private investment.

Acquiring the High Line

In 2004, after the mayor and city council declared that the High Line should be re-used rather than demolished, New York City joined with the State and CSX Transportation, Inc. (the owner of the High Line) to file with the federal Surface Transportation Board to "rail-bank" the High Line, effectively preserving the transportation corridor and allowing it to be used as a trail. Finally in 2005, CSX Transportation, Inc. donated a portion of the High Line railway (up to 30th Street) to the City, making the park a formal City project.

Design Process

In 2003, Friends of the High Line (FHL) sponsored an open ideas competition resulting in 720 submissions from around the world. Design ideas included a mile-long pool, a small-scale Appalachian Trail, a roller coaster, and other thought-provoking schemes. Because it was an ideas competition, "Designing the High Line" wasn't structured to identify an individual or team to be awarded a design contract—a necessary limitation given that ownership of the park was not yet settled. Nonetheless, this competition spurred the City Council to commit almost \$16M in seed funding for the project.

After the competition, Friends of the High Line hosted an open workshop with members of the community and incorporated their comments into a Request for Qualifications released by the organization, in conjunction with the New York City Economic Development Corporation. In 2005, James Corner Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro were selected to design the first section of the park.

BASIC FACTS

Size:	Almost 5 acres along a 1.5 mile stretch
Location:	West Side of Manhattan from the Jacob Javits Convention Center to the meatpacking district, two stories above the sidewalk
Owner:	City of New York
Manager:	NYC Dept. of Parks & Recreation (provides security; maintains park structures and accessibility) Friends of the High Line (manages day-to-day operations, maintenance, programming and outreach; raises private funds for the park)
Cost:	\$172M capital expenditures \$3.5-4.5M annual operating costs (\$1M funding from City annually; FHL is responsible for the rest)
Financing	City: \$112M (with \$45M from City Council) Federal: \$20M State: \$3M Private: \$44M
Features	Woodlands, grasslands, sun decks, public art, plazas, water feature, lawns, performance spaces, food vendors
Programming	hands-on art workshops, walking tours, yoga, stargazing, lecture series, puppet shows, treasure hunts, film screenings, garden talks, street fairs, live music



Top: High Line Park from above (Iwan Baan).
Bottom: Pathway through the park (Iwan Baan).

Governance

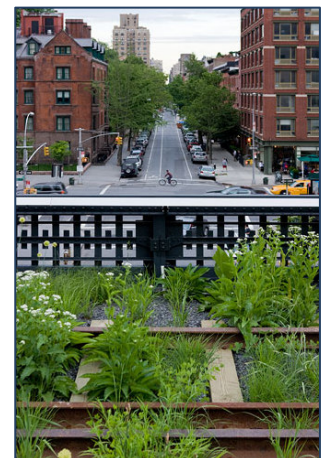
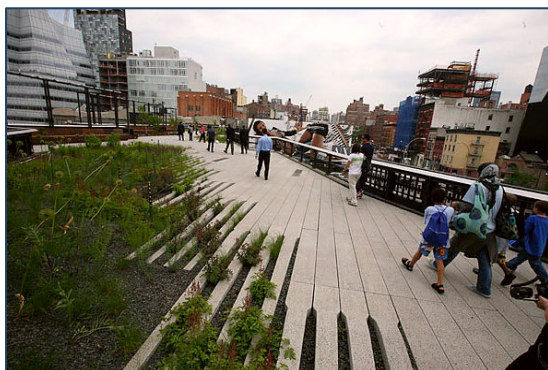
Major decisions for High Line Park are governed by an MOU executed between the mayor, city council and Friends of the High Line in the early 2000s. This agreement created the High Line Development Team, composed of staff from the Parks Department, Planning Department, NYC Economic Development Corporation, and Friends of the High Line. Although the team generally works together in a collegial, consensus-driven style, final decisions are made by the Park Commissioner.

In addition to members of the High Line Development Team, the Parks Department worked with several other City and State agencies throughout the planning process, including the City's Department of Transportation, Department of Buildings, Law Department and Landmark Preservation Commission; the Mayor's Development Office and Office for People with Disabilities; the Metropolitan Transportation Authority; and the State Historic Preservation Office. The City Council also played an active role during the early planning stages of the High Line Park, as its \$45M overall contribution represented an unusually large investment on the Council's behalf.

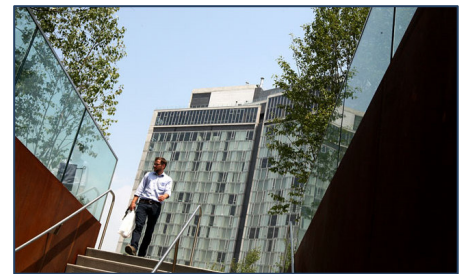
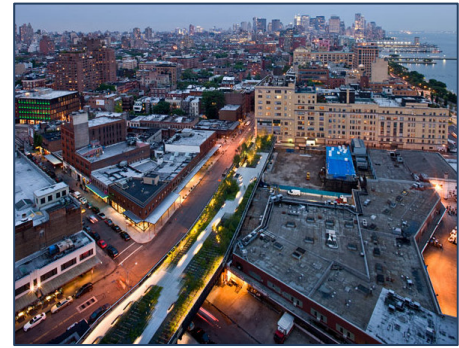
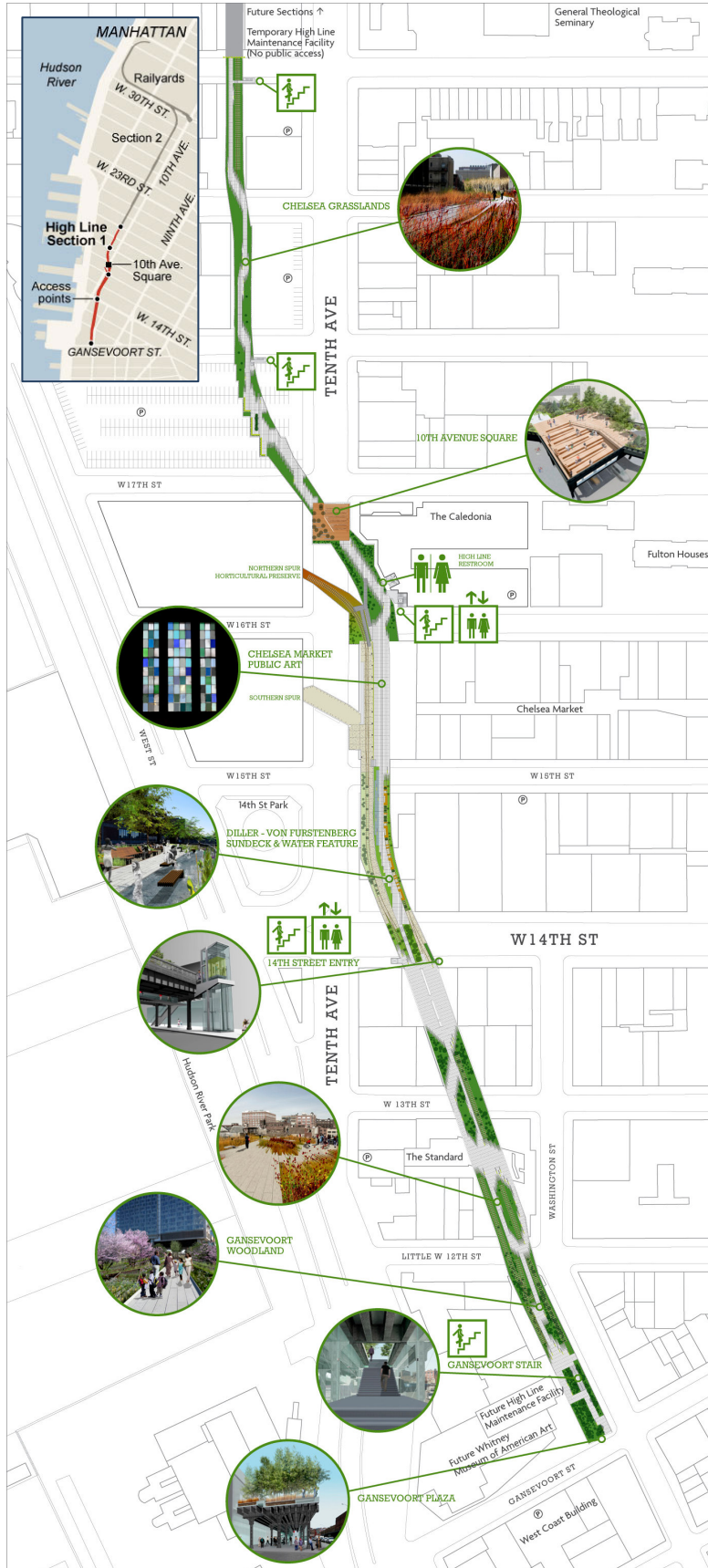
The Parks Department has a license agreement with Friends of the High Line for the management, operation and programming of the park, which assigns specific responsibilities to both parties. Under the agreement, the Parks Department is responsible for providing security. It also must approve all concessions, events and permits within the park. Friends is responsible for everything else, including staffing the park (except security staff). In order to fulfill these responsibilities, Friends of the High Line has staff devoted to horticulture and park operations, programming and outreach, administration, planning, design, communications, fundraising and event planning—all led by its two original founders and a 21-member board.

TIMELINE

1934	• The High Line is constructed by the New York Central Railroad as an elevated freight railway.
1980	• The last train runs on the High Line pulling three carloads of frozen turkeys.
1980s	• Chelsea Property Owners Association lobbies for the destruction of the High Line, arguing that it poses a danger to community residents and decreases property values.
1999	• Mayor Giuliani approves the demolition of the High Line. • Friends of the High Line (FHL) forms to advocate for its preservation and reuse as a public open space.
2001	• Mayor Bloomberg lends his support to the effort to preserve the High Line. • "Reclaiming the High Line," a study jointly produced by the Design Trust for Public Spaces and FHL, lays out a planning framework for the High Line's preservation and reuse.
2002	• A FHL study finds that new tax revenues created by the public space will be greater than the costs of construction. • City Council reverses the directive to demolish the abandoned railway and instead advocates for its reuse. • NYC files with the federal Surface Transportation Board for rail-banking.
2003	• 720 teams from 36 countries participate in an open ideas competition for the High Line; hundreds of design entries are displayed at Grand Central Terminal. • City Council Speaker Gifford Miller commits \$15.75M in seed funding for the High Line Park project at the preview to the open ideas competition show. • FHL holds a series of public workshops, with competition proposals serving as the springboard for discussion. • NY State Assembly Member Richard Gottfried commits \$50,000 to the project.
2004	• FHL and the City issue an RFQ and select a design team for High Line Park. • The State of NY, CSX Transportation, Inc. and the City jointly file with the Surface Transportation Board to rail-bank the High Line. • Mayor Michael Bloomberg adds \$27.5M to the City's earlier funding commitment for High Line Park.
2005	• High Line Park's preliminary design master plan by James Corner Field Operations and Diller Scofidio + Renfro is exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art. • CSX Transportation donates a section of the High Line to the NYC Parks Dept. • The City and CSX sign a Trail Use Agreement, effectively preserving the High Line south of 30 th Street. • \$18M in federal funds are committed to the project in the Transportation Appropriations Bill, thanks to the successful request by Senators Charles Schumer and Hillary Rodham Clinton, and Representative Jerrold Nadler.
2006	• Construction begins.
2008	• Final designs are released for High Line Park.
2009	• The first section of High Line Park opens.
2010	• Phase 2 of High Line Park is expected to be complete by the fall of 2010.



Left to right: Families stroll along the park (New York Times/Librado Romero). The original "High Line" elevated railway (Friends of the High Line). Looking over the edge of High Line Park (NYC Parks & Recreation).



Large map (Friends of the High Line). Inset map (New York Times). From top: The abandoned railway, pre-park (New York Times/Andrea Mohin). Aerial view of High Line Park (Iwan Baan). Views of the Hudson River (Iwan Baan). A High Line staircase above Washington Street, one of five access points to the elevated park (New York Times/Ruth Fremson). High Line Park (Spencer Platt/Getty Images).